

We created a monster

We created an efficient, life-changing, reliable and wonderful monster. We named him direct-response. And he ploughed around the western world creating fertile conditions for many beautiful things to grow.

Then he aged, got tired and lost his strength. So we're left seeking a replacement, that's almost as powerful, to shake up the world again.

But we're not the ones who get to choose this replacement... the public are. So we need to work with them and their pre-existing motivations.

And approach them in a way that makes them glad to see us, not tense and anxious.

Guards

Their guards are up.

With a billion people trying to get their attention and money, we have become experts at guarding both.

So you can't get people to consume the 500 words it takes to produce an emotional response, first, then a donation. Even if your appeal does get past their guard, there just isn't enough time.

Curiosity

This helps.

Something unexpected will open a window. It will be open for less than 4 seconds but it will be open, if... there's something new in the newsfeed.

Values

If you're reaffirming something I already believe, I'll listen to you.

If you're talking about a change that I already want to see, then you're justifying my worldview. You're backing me up. You're like me. And you are welcome to my newsfeed.

This also helps.

Actual Involvement

Not... will you tap this with your thumb?

Not... will you give me 5% of your disposable income for somebody you'll never meet?

Not... will you please set up this direct debit and forget about it for ages?

No, actual involvement.

Like, will you carry this important message on your arm? Will you pin it to your chest? Will you challenge people's perceptions next week and the week after that?

FREE in caps

Free is a powerful thing.

Free removes risk.

Free drowns doubt.

Free eradicates embarrassment.

How often are offered you something you want, for free? Very, very

rarely. It's powerful and it scales.

FREE in caps is almost cheating.

Good design

People gravitate towards good design.

People align themselves with good design.

So you will need a good designer.

The equation

Curiosity + Values + Actual Involvement + FREE + Good Design + Facebook Lead Ads = 100 phone leads per day

Then what?

Then you call them.

You leverage your existing Telemarketing knowledge and call these people. You arrange delivery of the item which actually involves them in your work. You thank them. Then involve them more. Then ask them if they'd like to give you a donation every month.

About 5 of them will say yes.

Facebook Leads Ads is the new part

It will feel like the hard part. It's not. Telemarketing is harder and you already know how to do that. (Or you know someone who does.)

You can test dozens of Facebook Lead Ads until you find the right two or

three. You can refine headlines and call-to-action buttons. You can keep running €100 tests until you have a breakthrough.

And when you crack it, it will stay cracked for months.

Facebook Lead Ads will combine with the advertising algorithms to dance an artificially intelligent dance around your country, finding the best prospects for you.

It will do all the work.

It will bring in leads at consistently low prices.

And you'll think it's beautiful.

And you feel like Tweeting @adrianoflynn... "You were right. The Facebook Ads algorithm is beautiful."

So wait, who do we target?

Everyone.

Literally, everyone in your country who uses Facebook.

The best media agency works pro bono

The Facebook Ads algorithm is the best media agency in the world.

It won't proclaim to know the best audience up-front. It won't shamelessly spout guesses while taking 15% of your media budget, just to make you feel reassured. It isn't delusional.

It won't pretend... but to avail of its power you have to stop pretending too.

This is the hard bit. Because professionally you're supposed to know

which image a 60-year-old woman in Brighton will click on. Because your profession is filled with people who claim to know what goes on in the minds of 60-year-old women in Brighton. But they don't. Nobody does. Not even female marketers who live just outside Brighton and are nearing retirement.

You know much less about people than you think.

I know almost nothing about people who I have never met. I never guess which ad will win in my campaigns. But I keep making predictions (confidently) to remind myself of how little I actually know.

There's power in this.

Mark Zuckerberg knows this too. The Facebook advertising algorithm waits until your campaign has 50 signups before it decides who to target. Based on the first 50 people who sign up, it creates a statistical model which predicts the type of people who are likely to sign up.

It leverages a decade of advertising data.

And it doesn't move on to other clients campaigns.

It doesn't wait for the end of your campaign to check the results. It refines the audience in real-time. It is constantly analysing and improving your results. Working tirelessly for your cause, pro bono.

And as the initial audience wears out, it tests and finds new ones.

The scary thing

The Facebook Ads algorithm is getting smarter. It's evolving, noticeably.

So this approach is more powerful as you're reading this, than it was when it was written.

And media agencies are even more screwed.

So are you ready to give this a try?

I really hope you are.

The key tasks are:

- 1. Choose a 3 8 word message
- 2. Choose an item
- 3. Find a graphic designer
- 4. Find a printer
- 5. Take 3 square pictures on a smartphone
- 6. Write 5 short, rousing copy versions
- 7. Build the Facebook Lead Ads by copying this video
- 8. Run it past your Data Protection Officer
- 9. Spend €500 in 14 days
- 10. Get a telemarketer to call the phone leads
- 11. Post the items to the 40-45% of people who answer
- 12. Calculate the Cost Per Acquisition
- 13. Do projections and ask your manager for more budget

The next twelve sections contain details on the execution of each step.

I want to provide enough detail to get you moving, without boring you. So please feel free to pick and choose your way through these.

Choose a 3 - 8 word message

The thing about this message is that it's easy to over-complicate. Your tendency will be to make this too long and too clever.

But this must be readable as person scrolls past a Facebook Lead Ad, on their phone. So the message cannot be longer than 8 words.

It should be a simple but strong statement.

One that reflects your values.

And hopefully, the values of thousands of people who may want to support your cause.

That's really all this message needs to do.

Some examples that would work well are:

- Education is for every child
- Every family deserves a home
- Greyhound racing needs to stop
- Syria still needs us
- Plastic pollutes your future

Choose an item

Your options are:

- Tote bag
- Badge
- T-shirt
- Ring

It has to be something that people can wear. It can't be a fridge magnet.

It has to be something visible. It can't be a pair of socks.

It has to be part of their identity.

Postage and packaging are a consideration. The smaller the item, the cheaper it will be. But this should not be the deciding factor.

Find a graphic designer

If you have a graphic designer who is keen to exercise their creativity to come up with something that is right at the edge of your brand guidelines, that's great.

If you don't, we recommend 99 Designs:

https://99designs.com/bag-tote-design

99 designs will run an auction where lots of graphic designers submit an initial design for your item.

This will be a mixed bag. Some will look like they were auto-generated by bots, but you're likely to get a few gems.

You've a better chance of getting a gem if you guarantee that one designer will win the auction. This is optional. You don't have to commit any money to this. But you'll get better designs if you do.

If you don't mind paying a bit more for a designer who has already delivered 1000s of new regular givers, then I recommend Sean O Reilly of SPOR Design.

He does all of my design work and he did this design for Dogs Trust Ireland.



Find a printer

It's likely that you know more about this than I do. So... find a printer who stocks and prints your item.

Take 3 square images on a smartphone

You do not need a professional photographer to get 5 new regular givers a day with Facebook Leads Ads.

A professional may actually hinder your ads by making them look more like advertising and less like a post from a friend.

This is a DIY job.

Set the camera on your Smartphone to square or a 1:1 ratio and take 3 bright, close-up images of the item out and about in the real word.

Suggested locations are:

- On a park bench
- In a coffee shop
- On a bridge
- On a person walking in the sun
- Laid out on a nice wooden table
- Laid out on grass
- At a canal / lake / beach / pier

The weird and wonderful thing about these images is that the ones which look the least professional, often win. People are allergic to the slick, glossy, fake images that advertisers have plagued them with for decades.

So don't overthink it.

Start snapping.

If you wanted to share the item with a friend on WhatsApp, what picture would you take?

Go take that picture.

If you're stuck, give the item to the youngest person in your office and ask them to send you some pictures of it on their lunch-break. Don't even tell them what it's for and they'll probably nail it.

Write 5 short, rousing copy versions

The headline should always be - Get your FREE [item]. So that's sorted.

Then for the main body of the message, use these:

[1]

We believe that [insert 3 - 8 word message]

Do you agree?

Show it.

[2]

Carry this message with you.

Stand up for [e.g. children, the environment].

[3]

[Open with a short statistic e.g. 108,000 children are living in poverty in Ireland.]

Do you think this is acceptable?

If not, wear this and stand against [e.g. poverty].

[4]

"Insert message"

Will you wear this [insert item] and let people know that this important?

[5]

Wear this.

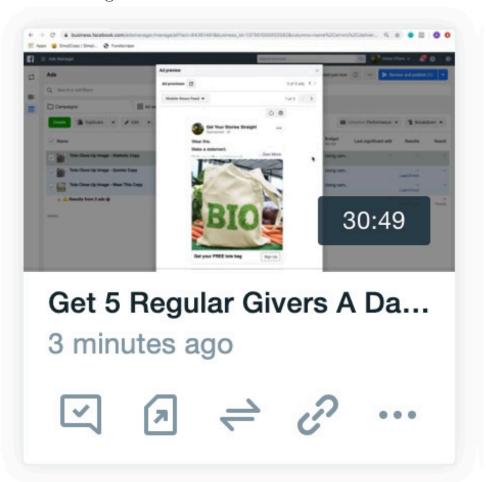
Make a statement.

Help save [e.g. children from poverty.]

Build the Facebook Lead Ads by copying this video

You'll find this on the Get Your Stories Straight Vimeo channel.

Or you can search "Get 5 regular givers a day with Facebook Lead Ads" on YouTube or Google.



This shows you exactly what you need to do.

Run it past your Data Protection Officer

Our clients have different interpretations of GDPR, so we leave this to them to decide.

Get Your Stories Straight does not offer data protection advice.

Email addresses and phone numbers are auto-populated on Facebook Lead Ad Forms. This is convenient. We do not recommend that you ask people to type in their address at this point. Most people simply won't do this.

It's more effective to obtain their address over the phone.

There are two ways to approach the collection of this personal data and the subsequent phone call.

- 1. Some clients include an opt-in to telemarketing on the Facebook Lead Form.
- 2. Some clients state in the privacy policy that they will call the person, just once, to arrange delivery of the bag. They also say they'll talk about their charity's work they do and ask for support. These people are not opted-in to telemarketing and will only receive one of these transactional calls.

Facebook Lead Forms have several options for opt-ins. The functionality is good. You can do most of the things you'd on, for example, a website donation form.

You can see these features in the video.

Spend €500 in 14 days

This is the minimum budget you'll need to give all 15 Facebook Lead Ads a chance to run.

It should also provide enough leads to get a sense of the contact rate and conversion to regular givers.

I'd be expecting:

Media Spend: €500 Phone leads: 300

Get a telemarketer to call the leads

This is not my speciality either. But I recommend using an established and reliable Telemarketing agency.

The specialists tell me that the call should start with a discussion about the bag and it's message, then move towards the charity's work and how to support it.

They also tell me that these calls are 50% to 80% longer than average.

Why? Because the FREE item gets people to let their guards down.

I'd be expecting:

Media Spend: €500 Phone leads: 300

Contact: 140

Regular givers: 14

Post the items to the 40-45% of people who answer

Don't forget this step! You'll need a process and maybe a volunteer for this, or perhaps a fulfillment house.

But for the first test, this volume should be manageable with some good will internally. The main reason to stretch the first €500 media spend out over 14 days, is to give you and your team time to figure this out.

Calculate the CPA

Graphic Design + Printer + Media Spend + Telemarketing + Packaging & Posting = Cost Per Acquisition

Do projections and ask for more budget

When you get this far, hopefully, you'll start to see the real value of this eBook.

Because you don't need an agency or a copywriter or a photographer, it is much easier to run small tests and get promising CPAs.

Then you can use the results of the initial test to make accurate projections and get more budget.

At this point, I'd push your manager for as much budget as possible.

They're likely to say,

"Let's just try another €500."

But before they do, suggest running the campaign on a cost-per-lead basis. Say,

"Now we know that about 5% of all leads will become regular givers. We expect this conversion rate to hold up. So the variable here is the cost-per-lead. I suggest we agree a target cost-per-lead of $\in X$ and I'll get as many leads as I can for less than that. By controlling the cost-per-lead, we can control the cost-per-acquisition."

You're effectively promising to spend **all** of the budget wisely.

It's a powerful re-framing.

And most Heads of Fundraising will relish this level of control.

The limiting factor may actually be the number of telemarketing calls

you can make per day, or the number of items you can post.

Without this approach

You'll continue on the same campaign-by-campaign basis, always rushing and learning relatively little.

The status quo in fundraising is to get the single, best combination of imagery and text, then rush around for a few weeks getting that ready, before spending 100% of your media budget on that one version.

Whether it works or not, you can't prove what made it strong or weak.

This is cumbersome.

This is out-dated.

This is the reason fundraising is stuck.

The world is changing quickly and, by and large, fundraising teams aren't learning fast enough to keep up.

Test more ads, learn more

Instead of spending 100% of your media budget on a single ad or direct mail pack, before starting from scratch again in a few months. Spend 5% of your media budget on 15 ads.

If that doesn't work, spend another 5% on another 15 ads. And keep doing this until you crack the campaign wide open.

Then spend the remainder of your budget to keep this successful acquisition campaign running for as long as possible.

Maybe spend 300% of your original budget, if the CPA stays lower than other acquisition channels.

Media Planning

If I haven't already convinced you that media agencies are screwed, consider this question... why would you plan your media up-front, when you have the least information?

This is a flexible medium. It allows you to add new creative and alter your media spend every day. So it's illogical to go around saying,

"We've got $\[\epsilon 5,000 \]$ to spend on this in February, we're going to spend $\[\epsilon 2,000 \]$ on that in March and we can't spend any more than $\[\epsilon 1,500 \]$ in June."

It doesn't make any sense.

Instead, you should say,

"We have €10,000 to spend acquiring phone leads this year. We are going to to try 8 different campaigns and hundreds of different ads. And the best performing ads will be allocated the majority of the budget."

Personally, I love working this way.

It gives you room to try things.

Out of hundreds of ads, you only need 5 or 10 strong ads to deliver results that get your board purring with approval.

Are you starting to see it?

Are you starting to see the importance of this flexibility?

Are you starting to see that you don't need an omniscient expert to bring digital fundraising to you on an expensive platter?

Flexibility and resources

What you will need, though, is resources.

You need people who can give the channel the attention it needs, every day.

They can do other stuff too, but they have to prioritise all of this stuff before it starts bringing in the big bucks. If they don't, it never will.

The two roles

We're getting into it now. Real management consultancy stuff. But I realise that manager-level considerations are just as important as the step-by-step guidance.

So if you're wondering what digital fundraising should look like in your organisation? The answer is a team of two people who are given their own budget and targets. (And who are not snowed under an avalanche of requests from other teams working on more established projects.)

You'll need one person who:

- Isn't afraid to write
- Has some good photos on their Instagram profile
- Isn't afraid of technology
- Is optimistic
- Is modest

And another person who:

- Is analytical
- Enjoys big-picture discussions e.g. Brexit, evolution
- Isn't afraid of technology
- Is optimistic
- Is modest

These roles could be fulfilled by multiple people or, if you're lucky, one person. You could also combine some bright, direct marketeers with a freelance copywriter.

But you'll need the willingness, the creativity, the analysis and the ability to admit when they were wrong, smile and move on.

Acceptance

I accept that this is a lot to take in and run with.

I accept that your charity isn't set-up to work in this way.

I accept that your team is under-resourced.

But I don't accept that this is hard. It's just new.

For committed fundraisers, who intend to make a substantial difference in the world, this is doable.

And, realistically, what is your alternative? To send even more letters to people who subscribed to National Geographic 15 years ago?

Yesterday

As I'm typing this in Google Docs, a client's Facebook Ads account is open in another tab.

Yesterday, they got 171 phone leads for €0.42 cost-per-lead. 7 of them will become regular givers.

In the last month, they've acquired 4,108 phone leads and 170 regular givers.

In the last 12 months, they've picked up more than 60,000 phone leads and 1,778 regular givers.

They only changed the Facebook Lead Ad creative twice in that period.

Most days they just logged-in, checked the cost-per-lead, downloaded the leads and sent them to the Telemarketing agency.

So yesterday, that was less than 5 minutes work for 7 new regular givers.

The best reason to start

There's an enormous gulf between personal experience and theoretical knowledge.

Personal experience guides our decisions and is valuable. It allows you to think on the fly and move forward despite uncertainty.

Theoretical knowledge is what you pick up at conferences or by reading blogs. It's abstract... a series of concepts floating in your memory which you can't really evaluate.

I've been guilty of spouting theoretical knowledge at conferences and seminars. People smiled and nodded. And then what happened? Approximately nothing.

They didn't know where to begin, so they never did.

They may still remember some of the theory, but they didn't have the personal experience to drive things forward and help the people they were meant to be helping.

What a waste of time and brainpower.

This eBook is an attempt to give you somewhere to begin. I want you to gain personal experience.

Because theory is nothing and practice is everything.

How to improve your tennis serve

If you wanted to improve your tennis serve, what would you do?

You'd practice hitting tennis balls, with a tennis racket, from the service line. You'd look for ways to consistently hit balls into the white square, without hitting the net.

Over time, you'd improve.

But your service game won't get any better by watching Wimbledon. You will not improve by talking about Wimbledon or watching expert pundits talk about Wimbledon.

And a three-day International Tennis-serving Conference in Holland won't help much either.

Two FREE sherpas

If you attempt to climb this mountain, there are two guides who know the terrain and can help you find safer, easier paths to the top.

They have made a huge amount of their personal experience available for free online. They are:

Andrew Foxell of Foxwell Digital

Nick Burne of Raise Thru & Give Panel

A mild-mannered research scientist

Be a mild-mannered research scientist about this.

Keep observing the data and dispassionately asking what it's telling you?

Keep following what the data is telling you until you have a

breakthrough.

The next big LOL

Always the neophiliac's question is beckoning... but what's the next big thing?

Always the answer is the same... Facebook has been around since 2004. Linkedin was founded in 2002.

Digital consultants LOL about this question when they meet up for coffee.

Why worry about the next big thing when you haven't figured out the big thing that's been here for a decade?

Be like the tortoise

Slow and steady wins the race.

Slow and steady leverages ground-breaking work and the world-class statisticians who work on the Facebook Ads algorithm.

Slow and steady makes your colleagues sit up and ask,

"How many?"

Email consultancy

I think we'd both be shocked to learn how few people actually read this far into this eBook.

But I am looking for the few.

I want to help the few because I've been there. I know how hard it is to

drive change when you're surrounded by people with no appetite for risk.

So, if you're serious about this, email your doubts and confusions to adrian@getyourstoriesstraight.com and I'll clarify anything that I haven't made clear enough here.

Obviously I can't commit to on-going consultancy via email, but I think one email up-front to set you on your way is a fair deal.

Broader things

I worry about crowdfunding. I worry that it's digital-ness is much more appealing than the average appeal on a charity's website. And I worry about obsoletion.

The charity sector needs people like you to be the real deal and persuade your colleagues to try something that might not raise any money, immediately.

Your patience and observation and continuous tweaking are what fundraising is lacking.

And these things will never be provided by an agency. It's just not how they work.

Charities need digital fundraising to be managed in-house.

So somebody on your team needs to step up to the mark.

The learnings addiction

Putting dozens of ads live means that you learn every time. This is like drinking coffee. It instantly feels good. And once you start doing it regularly, you won't be able to stop.

5 regular givers a day

That's 25 regular givers a week.

That's 100 regular givers a month.

That's 1,000 regular givers a year. That's digital fundraising

Why did you write this?

Because I'm sick of people talking themselves out of digital fundraising before they've given it a proper go.

Because the results I'm seeing don't match the narrative I'm hearing.

Because digital fundraising is here, now.

